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Josiah Quincy, the great mayor

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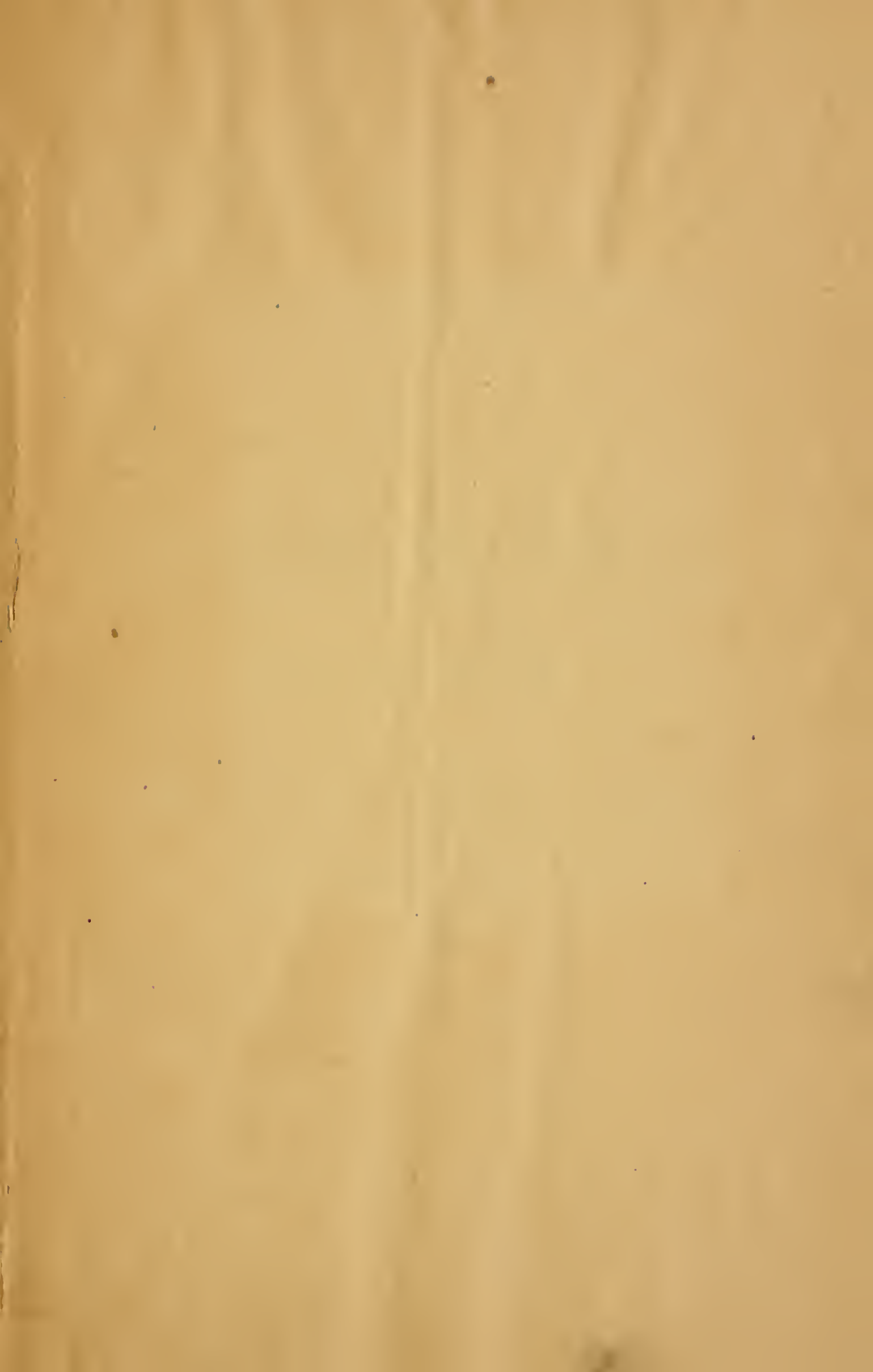
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# JOSIAH QUINCY,

THE GREAT MAYOR.

BY

MELLEN CHAMBERLAIN. ✓

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*Josiah Quincy*

A. L.



Massachusetts Society for Promoting Good  
Citizenship.

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# JOSIAH QUINCY,

THE GREAT MAYOR.

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE THE MASSACHUSETTS SOCIETY FOR  
PROMOTING GOOD CITIZENSHIP, AT THE OLD SOUTH  
MEETING-HOUSE, BOSTON, FEB. 25, 1889,

BY

MELLEN CHAMBERLAIN.

BOSTON:  
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## Josiah Quincy, the Great Mayor.

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IN front of the City Hall are two statues in bronze — one of Benjamin Franklin, and the other of Josiah Quincy. The artist has represented Franklin in his old age and the culminated splendor of his fame, revisiting, as he had often expressed a desire to do, the city of his birth, and standing in reverential attitude, with uncovered head, before the spot hallowed by memories of the old Boston Latin School, in which he received the rudiments of his education. No better site could have been chosen. With equal felicity of position Josiah Quincy, in the prime of manhood, stands on the opposite side of the inclosure, before the most august symbol of the city which he had done so much to build up and adorn. As works of art these statues provoked the vituperative eloquence of Boston's most gifted orator, and I hear that they divide the opinions of experts. However this may be, the characters they commemorate gain in respect with the passing years and the spread of letters.

In some circumstances of their lives Benjamin Franklin and Josiah Quincy resembled each other; in others, they were strongly contrasted. Natives of the same town, each represented the class from which he sprung, and each had no inconsiderable influence in shaping the institutions of Philadelphia and of Boston, in which they severally resided. Franklin was of the people, without fortune, or interest, or social position; but by self-culture and industrious use of his powers and opportunities, he became distinguished at home and abroad, and here, if nowhere else, is known as "the Great Bostonian." Josiah Quincy, on the other hand, was of "good family" — a phrase which denoted the highest distinction of rank accorded in the Boston of those days. His fortune, "counseling ignoble ease and peaceful sloth," was ample; but

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closing his ears to the sirens, he bound himself to laborious days, and, having acquired reputation in national affairs, so successfully promoted the development of municipal institutions in this city that he is now best known as "the Great Mayor."

The life of Franklin, often written, has been read in many lands, and thousands, following his precepts and example, have lived successful lives. Josiah Quincy's life by his son, a model of literary skill and, as a filial biography, unsurpassed if ever equaled, is less known than it ought to be; for in the field of civic affairs, everywhere now assuming importance, I know of no more instructive or exemplary life ever lived in America. That phase of it — its instructive and exemplary quality — is my theme this evening.

He was born here in Boston, on the easterly side of Washington Street, a few doors southerly from Milk Street, February 4, 1772, was graduated at Harvard College in 1790, admitted to the bar in 1793, and married in 1797. In May, 1804, he was elected to the State Senate, and in October of the same year, at the age of thirty-three, a Representative to Congress, where he sat until March 4, 1813. Declining further service in that body, with the exception of several terms in the General Court and the session of the Constitutional Convention of 1820, he was in private life, giving much attention to the cultivation of his ancestral acres at Quincy, until his appointment in 1821 as Judge of the Municipal Court of Boston, over which he presided for two years. From May, 1823, to January, 1829, he was Mayor of Boston. Failing of reëlection, he was chosen President of Harvard College in 1829, and held that office for sixteen years, residing at Cambridge. After his resignation of the presidency in 1845, he returned to Boston, resuming his summer residence at Quincy, and there, in his house overlooking the sea, he died, July 1, 1864, at the great age of ninety-two years, four months, and twenty-seven days.

Few of our public men have lived so long or through so many extraordinary events. His life began little less than a year before Samuel Adams, in Faneuil Hall, reported the "Rights of the Colonists," in one of the most important State papers of the Revolutionary period; and it ended little less than a year before Lee surrendered his army at Appomattox Court House. At the first period the Revolution, which severed an empire and made thirteen

subject colonies independent States, had become inevitable; at the second, the last slave shackle in Anglo-Saxon lands had been broken, and the decree of God was on the wing which reunited the great Republic as one, free and inseparable. What momentous events intervened! The first shot at Lexington and the bloody carnage at Bunker Hill; the Declaration of Independence and Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown; the Treaty of Peace, in 1783, and the framing of the Constitution of the United States, in 1787; the acquisition of Louisiana, including territory west of the Mississippi, more than doubling the area of the Republic; and the War of 1812, which first aroused the spirit of nationality in the people, and on the sea compelled the respect of the world; the adoption of an economic system developing antagonism between the manufacturing North and the cotton-growing South, at one time seriously threatening the Union, and the beginning of hostility to slavery which finally led to its extinction by civil war.

At the beginning of the Revolution Josiah Quincy was too young to have intelligently observed what was passing about Boston between 1774 and 1776, if, during these years, there had not been found a more safe retreat for him at Norwich, Connecticut; but from the adoption of the Constitution nothing of public interest escaped his notice.

There was, however, one interesting event of which he may have had a vague recollection. It was the "tea party" of December 16, 1773. In the afternoon of that day, his father, standing here in the Old South where I now stand, and speaking to those who sat where you now sit, said in words that have become historical: "It is not, Mr. Moderator, the spirit which vapors within these walls that must stand us in stead. The exertions of this day call forth events which will make a very different spirit necessary for our salvation" — words true now, and as applicable to affairs in this city today as they were more than a century ago when they reëchoed from these walls. In the evening of that afternoon the infantile ears of his son must have heard, though they heeded not, the tramp of men hurrying past his father's door to gather in this place; and they must have heard the war-whoop which came up out of the darkness of the street and was responded to by shouts from these dimly lighted galleries. Then Griffin's Wharf; then the Boston Port Bill; then Lexington and Bunker Hill; then the



Siege of Boston and the Declaration of Independence — events which he could have known only as we know them.

Though Josiah Quincy doubtless knew Samuel Adams, it does not appear that he sought his society. Samuel Adams was much the older, and they were of different political parties. But with John Hancock, who married Dorothy Quincy, his father's cousin, he was better acquainted, and once at least was his guest in the old Hancock House, now unfortunately no longer standing. Honor to the man, the President of this Society, who, with a just sense of the value of patriotic associations to good citizenship, did so much to save the Old South!

He knew Washington also, and so did Mrs. Quincy. Their estimates of the personality of that great man were widely different, she regarding him as "more than a hero — a superior being, as far above the common race of mankind in majesty and grace of personal bearing as in moral grandeur;" and he, forsooth, as not unlike "the gentlemen who used to come to Boston in those days to attend the General Court from Hampden or Franklin County, in the western part of the State — a little stiff in his person, not a little formal in his manner, and not particularly at ease in the presence of strangers." In this difference of estimate we see one touch of nature which makes all married couples kin.

I have given you a mere outline of Mr. Quincy's life. It was long, useful, honorable. In whatever field of labor he entered he soon became distinguished; but when, in May, 1823, in the second year of the city, Josiah Quincy became its Mayor, he found the place suited more than any other, I think, to his talents and his moral qualities; and in the six years that he served the city he did the work which gave him his highest fame, and in the retrospect of a long and varied career, the most satisfaction.

His new office certainly was less conspicuous as a theater of action than the floor of the House when filled by Randolph of Roanoke, Clay, Calhoun, Webster, and Macon; and the proceedings of the city government attracted less attention, if any, in Europe or in this country, than national affairs from the Embargo of 1807 to the Peace of 1815. And when, in 1823, Josiah Quincy, in the prime of life and in the fullness of his great powers, reëngaged in public affairs as the chief magistrate of a small city, it is

not unlikely that his old associates at Washington, whom he had led in attack, and such as had felt the vigor of his onset, regarded the change of position as a descent. Even in this day of grace the mayoralty of a great city, which with its grand possibilities to all sincere men might well seem the summit of a career, is too often looked upon as a stepping-stone.

On the other hand, when, in 1829, he became president of the oldest and most conspicuous college in the land, not unknown in Europe, it was doubtless thought that Mr. Quincy at length had reached a position more worthy of his great abilities and of his rich and varied culture. But it is a fair question whether, during the eight years he was in Congress, where, encountering Henry Clay without discomfiture, he delivered a series of speeches, in the judgment of Webster the best of that period, or during the sixteen years that he was president of the college and rescued it from financial peril, reformed its administration, and placed it on a firm basis, he did a work so peculiarly his own, or one so far beyond the powers of other men, or by which he desired or deserved to be remembered, as that of the six years that he was Mayor of Boston.

Mr. Quincy, voluntarily retiring from Congress March 4, 1813, never officially reëngaged in national affairs, to the regret of his friends and, as his son suggests, possibly to his own in later years. I think we need not share that feeling. Doubtless with opportunity he would have acquired great distinction, and possibly be more widely known today. We now see, however, that John Quincy Adams accomplished everything in diplomacy, or in national administration, that Mr. Quincy could have done, nor could Mr. Webster's senatorial career have been surpassed. But what other American known to history could have equaled Mr. Quincy's work in municipal affairs; or who will presume to determine its relative importance to that of either of his great compeers?

I have no desire to magnify the subject assigned to me. Certainly I have none to overestimate the relative value of one period of service to any other of Mr. Quincy's life, and still less to the service of those who, from John Phillips to the present hour, have filled the Mayor's chair with honor. Boston has been fortunate in the selection of her chief magistrates; but by any standard and by any comparison, Mr. Quincy's work as Mayor was a great work of enduring value, and his place is high up among able and useful men of his age and country.

I think we may safely go farther, and say that in the department of American municipal affairs no one of his countrymen ever had a wider, more profound, more permanent, or more beneficent influence than that of Josiah Quincy as Mayor of Boston. This was due in part, no doubt, to the fact that Boston was one of the earliest incorporated cities in the country, and perhaps the first to bring all departments of its government into that harmonious adjustment which made it a pattern for other cities in the United States, and, in certain particulars, for some in Europe. It is equally true that Josiah Quincy, like all men essentially great, recognized the advantages of his position and made the most of them; and so far as he made Boston what it was, and as widely and permanently as it has influenced the institutions of other cities, so wide and permanent ought to be his just fame. Such was his opportunity. Then came his hour; and I think he made it an epoch in the history of municipal government.

Who and what then was Josiah Quincy; how did he equip himself for his work; for what do his life, his character, and his services stand to us?

Here was a man in rare combination of birth, talents, personal accomplishments, and estate — the most enviable man of his day in America. That was his good fortune. It is ours, if we will make it so, that there was nothing in any or in all of the essential circumstances of his life, or his character, or conduct, which we cannot imitate, adopt, and follow. And it is just this imitable and exemplary quality which makes him, on the whole, the best model hitherto appearing in our American life upon which to form ourselves. The consummate genius of Henry Clay, who first aroused the spirit of nationality in the people, or of Webster, who molded the Constitution to it, or of Lincoln, who called a million of armed men to its defense, so far transcends the limits of ordinary rational aspiration as to make imitation ridiculous. Had Mr. Quincy belonged to that class of men, in despair we might turn off the lights, and, in the seclusion of our homes, giving rein to imagination, vainly identify ourselves with those rare spirits who have appeared to dazzle, to delight, and to elude us! Happily for us, in what he did for good government, or in what his example may inspire us to do for good government, he



was of a different order, though I think we shall quite as soon see another Henry Clay, or Daniel Webster, or possibly Abraham Lincoln, as another Josiah Quincy. Each in some particulars surpassed him. But in the genius of character—in the combination of intellectual and moral qualities—he has had no superior in our American life. And it is character which finally prevails; which molds institutions and forms a people for greatness; which gathers to itself and expresses what is best and most permanent in race qualities. It is the dominating and permanent influence on society. The stream finds its path, not by the lights which glitter along its course, nor by sun, moon or stars above, but by its headlands and firm-set shores. Our Puritans prevailed, not because of the intellectual greatness of one, but because many were great in character; and so it must ever be. Great as were Mr. Quincy's abilities, his preëminence was in character. And it is this which draws us to the Old South tonight; not to search his life for entertaining anecdotes—of which there are many—or points effective in biographical description. With set purpose I shall pass over everything, however attractive, which is not profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, or for instruction in the righteousness of citizenship. I wish to discern in his life and character and services, if I may, whatever will instruct and inspire us to the formation of like character, to undertake similar services so far as our circumstances allow, and to act with the same fidelity to duty. Failing in this, I fail utterly.

Mr. Quincy did not, like Franklin, raise himself from poverty to affluence and power; but he was exposed to perils which Franklin escaped—perils which most of us escape; perils of social position as the only son of an eminent revolutionary patriot enrolled by great services and early death among the martyrs; of his singularly attractive personality—a fatal gift to one of less austere self-control; of his fortune, permitting a life of elegant leisure elevated by no sincere purpose; of a hereditary domain crowned by a historic mansion hospitable to illustrious visitors from other lands, as well as his own, including three Presidents of the United States—a social distinction satisfying to a moral sense less robust, less exacting than his own. How many have been wrecked by perils which Josiah Quincy avoided; how few have acknowl-

edged the obligations he assumed; how many have laid down the burdens he carried nearly a hundred years; how many, withholding, or in disgust withdrawing, themselves from public affairs for which they are eminently fitted, by education, fortune and social position, have yielded to the seductions of pleasures, not always innocent, and lived their lives, and exhausted their gifts, with no results of value to themselves or to others!

Franklin and Quincy were both great men; and it is not their least — perhaps it is their highest — claim to grateful remembrance that each, pushing aside the obstacles and escaping the perils which beset him, made the most of his powers and opportunities. Higher honor no man ever gained than this; than this of no man God requires more. Seldom has the same town produced two such men, each recognized as the best type of some characteristic trait of its people — Franklin of their thrift, the result of right conduct; Josiah Quincy of their fitness for citizenship, which for two hundred years, in peace and in war, had made Boston a most conspicuous and influential municipality; himself to become more widely known as the rights and duties of citizenship are accorded their just place in the education and life of the people, as they must inevitably be with the development of republican government.

Mr. Quincy's talents were great, so great that more safely than most men he could have dispensed with laborious preparation for his public work; but, save John Adams and his son, John Quincy, I know no one of our countrymen who so assiduously prepared for it. From early manhood he fitted himself for citizenship with very clear notions of its value and just demands; and he cultivated his powers by an exhaustive study of every question likely to engage them.

Although completely equipped for office, Josiah Quincy, so far as I can discover, never sought it; nor, what is quite as much to his credit considering his easy fortune, did he ever refuse it. I think we may safely say that he never accepted office for its honors or its emoluments, nor declined it to escape its labors, its responsibilities, or even its obloquy. When he accepted the mayoralty it was not that he might make himself famous, but, as he hoped, that he might make the city eminent for good order,



for honest government, and for the prosperity of its people — make it

“ Athens the eye of Greece, mother of arts  
And eloquence, native to famous wits  
Or hospitable ; ”

nor did it change his determination or his conduct by a hair's breadth when he foresaw, as he did from the beginning, that after such services the people would reject him.

I am now to give some account of the services which enroll Josiah Quincy as “ the Great Mayor ” among chief magistrates of the city. He succeeded John Phillips in May, 1823, and held the office six years. As the history of his administration is in some sort a “ Tract for the Times,” I desire to preface it by recalling to your recollection the state of municipal affairs in Boston in 1821, at the time the people were discussing their fundamental government — whether it should remain, as for two hundred years it had been, essentially democratic, or be changed more completely to a representative government. An interesting question not only in Boston but elsewhere ; for about the time when Mr. Quincy was giving attention to the subject, Guizot, who had been of the ministry of Louis XVIII, in which he took an active part in the establishment of representative government in France, was preparing a course of lectures, afterwards expanded and published, in 1852, as “ The History of the Origin of Representative Government in Europe.” Guizot believed in representative government, and yet when he published that work he had witnessed the bad fortune of the experiment in France in 1820, the severer test of it in 1830, and its disastrous failure when Louis Napoleon seized the government in 1851. Nevertheless his faith endured, and in the wreck of hopes and reasonable expectations, with sublime serenity, he said that “ among the infinite illusions of human vanity we must number those of misfortune ; whether as peoples or individuals, in public or in private life, we delight to persuade ourselves that our trials are unprecedented, and that we have to endure evils and surmount obstacles previously unheard of. How deceitful is this consolation of pride in suffering ! God has made the condition of men, of all men, more severe than they are willing to believe ; and he causes them at all times to purchase at a dearer price than they had anticipated the success of their labors and the progress of

their destiny. Let us accept this stern law without a murmur; let us courageously pay the price which God puts upon success, instead of basely renouncing success itself."

It hightens our respect for Mr. Quincy that, though he was opposed to a city charter and resisted it by speech and pen as long as there was any chance of defeating it, yet, when adopted, with sincerity and untiring labor he devoted his powers and his time to make it successful.

Like some other able men of his day, he believed the pure democracy of the town meeting more suited to the character of the people of New England and less liable to corruption and abuse than a more compact government, which, with all its checks and balances, checks after the collision and balances after the load is overturned quite as often as before — a system which breeds confidential clerks and swells the population of Montreal — a sort of "Waterbury watch" affair, out of which you get no more time than you put into it!

After nearly seventy years of representative city government it is premature to say what form it will ultimately take; whether it will return to the old democratic simplicity, if some practicable scheme can be devised, or still further simplify representation by abolishing all intermediaries, such as the Board of Aldermen and Common Council, and, intrusting everything to the Mayor, with such heads of departments as he may choose, hold him responsible for good government. This has one advantage of a monarchy. If the people dislike the monarch they can decapitate him, as they often have done; with representative bodies this is not quite so convenient, though often quite as desirable and necessary!

It took six thousand years to ascertain whether, by just law, the sun should revolve around the earth as a center, or the earth around the sun. Copernicus settled that question; and we await the advent of an equal genius to adjust the revolution of political bodies agreeably to the divine order. In the meantime we must wait, but not idly. As we ourselves have to do, so did Mr. Quincy take things as he found them — not altogether as he would have chosen. When he came to the government he found matters much as they are now. Then there were proportionally as many who pleaded, as we do, in excuse for declining participation in public affairs, "that their opinions, tastes, and what seemed to them right modes of action, were so different from those of a large part of the people and so

unlikely to result in success that it was hardly worth while to waste their energies in the vain endeavor to secure good government; that matters were in a bad way doubtless, but that they could better bear the ills of bad government than afford the time required for their correction; that a few right-minded people were of small account among so many wrong-minded, and at worst that they were as well off as others." Mr. Quincy had quite as good reason as we have for impatience, discouragement, and disgust with popular ignorance, unreasonableness, and caprice, with the greed of the selfish and the indifference of well-to-do people.

The change from the old town government to a city government, requiring a surrender of methods dear to the people by immemorial usage and the adoption of new methods necessarily abridging many of their former liberties, caused discontent, which increased rather than diminished after their first year's experience of the new system. For two hundred years the town government had performed its functions, upon the whole, with results satisfactory to the people. It was their own — to them a great merit; for in it they made their power felt without much dilution by passing through a representative medium. It was economical — another merit; for the people were economical. They treated the unfortunate and vicious classes with slight regard to health, comfort, or their possible restoration to better conditions. Streets were narrow, ill paved, unswept, and drainage disgracefully inadequate; but wide streets, well paved, well lighted, and well drained were costly luxuries, to be had only by taxation. They had rebelled against British taxation, and quarreled with the domestic article. They disliked the thing, by whatever name. Consequently their legislation was from hand to mouth, with little regard to system, or prevision of remote consequences, good or bad.

This was a serious embarrassment to Mr. Quincy, whose broad and forecasting mind projected measures requiring time for their perfection and for yielding their best results. Of course the people were not unaware of the impracticability of 7,000 voters assembling in one place, usually Faneuil Hall, to choose town officers, levy taxes, and determine with due deliberation the various and complicated legislative and executive affairs for a population of 40,000; and, as we shall see, they had delegated some of their more important functions to executive boards. Nevertheless, five times



between 1784 and 1821 they had refused a charter, and finally accepted it only by a majority of 1,500 of the 5,000 voters who took the trouble to express their wishes at the polls.

The government had changed, but the people remained the same. Old habits were strong. They missed their March meeting — a sort of festival day on which they had assembled in Faneuil Hall, chosen town officers, and done their town business, as had their fathers for two hundred years, and outside exchanged friendly greetings and the news, and now and then made sharp bargains. For the young were frolic and sport and gingerbread and fire-crackers, dear to boys. How different from all this were cold, isolated ward rooms, with no debates and no James Otis, or Samuel Adams, or Harrison Gray Otis, the most brilliant of orators until Wendell Phillips arose in Faneuil Hall to electrify the peninsula and recall the austere virtues of the Puritans.

Nor was sentimental attachment wanting. The town meeting had endeared itself to the people in affording opportunities for resisting every form of royal predominance, civil or ecclesiastical, which interfered with their rights, real or imaginary, and by its agency in bringing on and carrying forward the Revolution. Some of the older men had seen how effectively, how wisely, Samuel Adams had handled it, and generally, though not always, how unselfishly. It had been the palladium of their liberties, and they were sorry to give it up.

Now these principles, reasons, and prejudices, although shared by Josiah Quincy, were a serious hindrance to his government, into which they were carried by the people, and made themselves more and more manifest as the stringency of new rules interfered with old customs and interests. There was laudation of old ways, and much carping at the new, chiefly because they were new.

From a very early day many legislative and executive powers of the town government had been given over to Selectmen, Overseers of the Poor, Board of Health, Firewards, and Assessors ; and it came to pass that the first three of these boards constituted a Finance Committee, which determined appropriations, assessment of taxes, and expenditures. Although they owed their election, and nominally their powers, to the people, practically they were self-perpetuating oligarchies, which claimed to carry their functions into the new city government in 1822, and were only suppressed by

the tact and persistence of Mr. Quincy in asserting the just authority of the new government under the charter.

When Mr. Quincy became Mayor the new government had been running a year. The first Mayor, an able and worthy gentleman, does not appear to have given much attention to municipal affairs; and other public burdens, with failing health, prevented his grappling with troublesome questions. He left them with Mr. Quincy. The charter, as drafted by the late Chief Justice Shaw, was a model. But paper government was one thing, and a working government was quite another thing—a machine needing adjustment. This was no easy matter. An indolent, easy-going Mayor, to whom conscience was of less account than comfort, caring less to have matters run correctly than smoothly, and more solicitous respecting his reelection than for the public interests, would have got on with a tithe of the trouble which Mr. Quincy took to himself.

In everything relating to the construction or working of the charter, and to the management of city affairs, he had a way of his own. He studied subjects until he knew them better than any other man. Of this, I dare say, he was conscious, and perhaps he was opinionated. Nevertheless, he was a just man, judicially just, determined, inflexible, steadfast. Nothing escaped his eye, and in labor he was untiring.

Here was the right man for the place, yet very much in the way—in the way of all wrong-headed people; of those whose private interests conflicted with the public interests; of all who had jobs; of all who wished to be left alone in pursuit of their selfish courses or passions, regardless of the general weal.

In giving an account of the new Mayor's work I cannot go very fully into details; but in general terms, and with due regard to facts, I think I may say that there was no one of our public institutions, nor anything in the mode of conducting them, which gave rank to Boston among cities quite out of proportion to its territory or population, and made it a model for other cities, which either did not originate in the inventive mind of Josiah Quincy, or owe to his shaping hand completer development and more beneficent action. His work covered public morals, health, education, convenience, and comfort; streets, sewers, and water; penal, reformatory, and industrial institutions; markets, police, fire



department, and an incipient public garden. With efficient coadjutors and, in a general sense, the public support, yet he was the greatest factor in every work. He inspired, he led. Before his time mayors were often merely presiding officers — ornamental figure-heads. Executive powers had fallen into the hands of boards. Lack of unity and efficiency followed. Mr. Quincy determined to be Mayor. Therefore he gathered up all the powers which the charter, in express terms or by fair construction, gave him, and he used them with results before unknown; not to engross power, but, as he said, “to produce and fix in the minds of all influential classes of citizens a strong conviction of the advantages of having an active and willingly responsible executive, by an actual experience of the benefits of such an administration of their affairs; and also of their right and duty of holding the Mayor responsible in character and office for the state of the police and finances of the city.”

Such were Mr. Quincy's views respecting good government. To bring it about taxed his powers to the utmost. He succeeded, and his success was the best solution of the problem of city government hitherto presented. The sequel is worth noting. After he left the mayoralty, in 1829, there set in a departure from his views, which finally became wide. Old jealousies between the different departments of government revived. The legislative branch claimed a share in the powers of the executive department, and both in those of the Mayor. The General Court yielded to the clamor for popular rights; and after a time we came to have a government which, lacking unity of power and consequent responsibility, did not govern. Matters finally came to such a pass that, in 1885, the Legislature again intervened and remodeled the charter so as to act more nearly in the spirit in which Mr. Quincy administered it sixty years before.

When Mr. Quincy had established the government on a good basis, he instituted a series of reforms, more than a score in number, which gave to Boston a high rank among municipalities, and made it in many respects a model city; a model of institutions for the criminal, the improvident, and the unfortunate; of well-paved, clean-kept, and well-lighted streets; of sewerage and systematic removal of public and private offal; of administrative measures

concerning public health, education, police, and markets; of the preservation of natural scenery, such as the islands in the harbor, and for the inauguration of a park system, now unfolding itself with promise to public health and morals and the sense of beauty.

Without order of time, and grouping some related measures, I now specify a few of Mr. Quincy's services. If today, or at any time before today, Boston has or has had the reputation of being one of the cleanest and most healthy of large cities, it is due mainly to Josiah Quincy. He took the matter in hand soon after his inauguration—and there was need. Conflicting boards claimed sole authority to clean the streets and remove offal. Consequently the work was not well done. The powers inefficiently exercised by these boards were transferred by legislative authority and municipal consent to the Mayor and Aldermen, who got to work with such effect that "for the first time, on any scale destined for universal application, the broom was used upon the streets; every street, alley, court, and household yard, however distant and however obscure, was thoroughly cleansed." The death rate was lessened and the comfort of the people increased.

With like vigor, and with similar discouragements, Mr. Quincy overhauled criminal and pauper institutions. There was an almshouse in the heart of the city. Its inmates, allowed to wander through the streets, some intoxicated, some begging, had become a public nuisance. For nearly a hundred years their care had been intrusted to the Overseers of the Poor, excellent gentlemen, with old-time notions of their powers as well as of the management of paupers. With this board he had a contest. He won; and, as a result, there were set up on spacious grounds at South Boston, amidst healthful influences, a House of Correction, a House of Industry, and a House for the Reformation of Juvenile Offenders. This change, salutary to their inmates, promoted the security and comfort of dwellers in the city proper. Several of these institutions have since been removed to Deer Island, and that for the Reformation of Juvenile Offenders, which originated with Mr. Quincy, attracted the attention of De Tocqueville, sent by the French government in 1832 to inquire into the penitentiary system of the United States.

Before Mr. Quincy's time some of the leading religious societies had derived considerable revenue from the sale of burial rights

in tombs beneath their church edifices. Respectable medical practitioners said there was no harm in this; but Mr. Quincy effectually opposed its continuance on the score of public health, and this led to the establishment of extra-mural cemeteries, now so common, of which Mt. Auburn was the first.

Public morals, no less than public health, engaged his attention. There was a district of the city, now quite respectable, then congested with jail-birds, thieves, miscreants, and the most abandoned of both sexes, who haunted houses of ill-fame, and, issuing therefrom, committed all sorts of crimes, including murder, and in their Boston Alsatia defied the police. Mr. Quincy took them in hand, and shortly the worst offenders were in the House of Correction at South Boston. The district was restored to good order and respectability, and the city became more secure.

Mr. Quincy's work appears at its best only in the fullest details, though time does not allow their recital. Nothing within municipal authority escaped his attention; there was no department which, after his six years of service, did not show the effect of masterly organization and administration. There are two subjects, however, which even in a cursory survey of Mr. Quincy's labors ought not to be overlooked.

Every one knows, generally at least, that Boston owes to Josiah Quincy what is now best known as Quincy Market; but unless he has studied the subject, no one knows the change effected in that section of the city, or the labor by which private interests were satisfied and the people induced to engage in a work so expensive, which yet resulted in the erection of "a granite market house, two stories high, four hundred and thirty-five feet long, fifty feet wide, and covering 27,000 feet of land, including every essential accommodation, at the cost of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Six new streets were opened and a seventh greatly enlarged, including 167,000 square feet of land, and flats, docks, and wharf rights were obtained of the extent of 142,000 square feet; and all this was accomplished in the center of a populous city, not only without tax, debt, or burdens upon its pecuniary resources, notwithstanding in the course of its operations funds to the amount of upwards of \$1,100,000 had been employed, but with large permanent addition to its real and productive property."



It is perhaps less well known that Mr. Quincy extinguished private rights to lands at the foot of the Common, since become part of the Public Garden, which secured what was then one of the most repulsive, now one of the most beautiful, spots in the world, and made practicable the policy of the State in laying out and filling up the Back Bay and opening public squares, for which the people were not then prepared.

It has been often said by some who were citizens of Boston during Mr. Quincy's administration, that the trait of his character which most strongly impressed them, as exhibited on many occasions, was courage, and that he might well be best remembered still as "the Fearless Magistrate." There was one occasion on which he gave an example of moral courage which even in this sketch ought not to be passed over. It was in respect to the fire department. This organization held an important relation to the property and the lives of the people. Numbering twelve hundred young men, bound together by common associations and common dangers, impatient of new ways and jealous of any infringement on their customary privileges, they were a power at the polls quite out of proportion to their numbers—a power which they were not slow to exert on occasion. Mr. Quincy's efforts in reducing the department to stricter discipline, and even more, his insistence upon the use of hose instead of buckets, and cisterns instead of pumps, and his bringing from Philadelphia and New York new and improved fire engines, had caused ill feeling which showed itself in insubordination and acts of violence. This state of things prepared the way for an outbreak in the last year of Mr. Quincy's administration on the appointment of a chief engineer not to the firemen's liking. Mr. Quincy's resoluteness in meeting this exigency, and the promptitude and efficiency with which he filled the places of those who expected to force the Mayor's position by tendering their resignation, showed the people how fearlessly he could discharge his duty even at the cost of his reelection, as he foresaw might be and was the case.

In estimating "the Great Mayor," it is not enough to look merely at the amount and variety of his services. Though his intellect was of a high order, his influence was largely in character,

devotion to his work, untiring industry, sincerity, decision of manner tempered by exactest courtesy, cordiality, helpfulness, physical and moral intrepidity. Some of us saw him in his old age, the most venerable figure in our streets; others, at the college before time had bowed his form; but the memory of few now present reaches back to the days when, in the prime of his long life — with his high-bred face no more noticeable man in America\* — often before the sun was up, he rode his daily round of inspecting the city; or when, in a riot, he put himself at the head of the truckmen, hastily extemporized as an auxiliary police force, and moved down upon the mob. In every relation of life, public or private, his character, bearing, and personality gave assurance of a man. Such qualities impressed institutions as well as society.

To found a city, or to establish institutions and indelibly stamp them by character and services, has ever been held a great achievement. When Themistocles, the Athenian, would boast, he said that he “could make a small town a great city.” Mr. Quincy never boasted, though he was not unconscious of his great powers, nor that he had wrought into the fabric and texture of the city what would survive the fashions of municipal government. Since his time changes have taken place, and others will doubtless follow; but neither the work nor the fame of Josiah Quincy can ever perish. They are on the rock. His mayoralty was great in economic and material results — promoted cleanliness, order, comfort; but was even greater, I think, in its successful endeavor after public virtue, purity, and social right.

In the lowest and least complete estimate of his services Mr. Quincy earned the respect of his constituents and the benediction of later generations; but the former rejected him and we are in danger of forgetting him. This ought not so to be, more for our own sake than for his. After he had filled the office of Mayor for six

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\* The likeness facing the title-page is from a portrait painted by Stuart when Mr. Quincy was Mayor, and is one of the four of him in oil which remain. But in none of them can we see him as he appeared on taking his degree, in peach-colored coat, white satin small-clothes with silk stockings, and powdered hair; nor in the splendid uniform of the “Huzzars.” Page painted him in his robes as President of the University, and Story made a model of a statue which, though regarded as one of his best works, has never been put into marble. There are also portrait busts of him by Greenough and Crawford.



years with assiduity and success unparalleled, the people, in spite of these services and partly because of them, refused to reëlect him.

What then? Did all his great services go for nothing? Was self-respect clouded or honor lost? The citadel of self-respect is unassailable from without, nor is honor the gift of the people. They can neither bestow it nor withhold it. It inheres in conduct and in character, is not gained save by honest endeavor, nor lost save by misconduct. It was Washington's in the successes of Trenton and Princeton, and no less his in the defeats of Brandywine and Germantown; his when Gates and Conway, Mifflin and Samuel Adams, I am sorry to say, would have deposed him; and his, no less and no more, when kings and princes and people in remote lands and later ages pronounced him greatest among men. No — nothing is so honorable as honor unjustly withheld, no praise so acclaiming as the silence of lips that should speak, no victory so victorious as defeat in just cause. For when men were silent and their eyes averted, as Josiah Quincy stepped down from the Mayor's chair in 1829, public health and security spake; and so did beneficent institutions; and so spake the New Faneuil Hall Market, and spacious warehouses, and broad, well-paved streets; yea, and the very stones of those streets, and the virtuous poor who owed to him comforts before denied, and youth reclaimed from vicious ways, and just men and women looked on him with kindly eyes, and with according voices proclaimed honor to whom honor unjustly withheld was due; and he has taken his place among those dear to God, who serve their fellow-men without expectation of reward.

But what is all this to men of limited capacities and commonplace opportunities — to us members of the Society for Promoting Good Citizenship, who have neither high aspirations nor special fitness for public affairs? Rightly considered, it is everything; it is incitement, endeavor, success, or consolation. I have said that among great men Mr. Quincy was exceptionally rare in this: that his character, his conduct, and his services are imitable. There is no one in this audience, however low in fortune or social position, none however high, that may not wisely form himself on Josiah Quincy's character and imitate his conduct; and if we lack his opportunities, at least we may remember that before he

was the great Mayor he was the great Citizen; and before he was the great Citizen he was a good citizen — as any one of us may be!

His political ethics were simple, easily adopted, and of universal concern. He believed in the duties of the citizen; that peril to the republic or to the city or to civilization is less from the intrusion of the lower classes into public affairs than from the withdrawal of the wealthy, educated, and refined class; less from the spoliations of the proletariat than from the indifference of the wealthy and educated; and he regarded as less obnoxious to just censure him who takes on the duties of the citizen for private ends than one who abstains for merely personal convenience.

I do not think Mr. Quincy found all his work congenial. That such a man — a man who understood and enjoyed the best of the world's literature, who loved agriculture and the society of refined men and women — should busy himself, forsooth, with drains and cesspools; with back yards and crowded tenements; with criminals, and the poor, and the squalid, and the sick. This certainly could not have been altogether attractive to Mr. Quincy, a born aristocrat, who could run his lineage back to the rolls of Battle Abbey without encountering the gallows or losing himself in a felon's cell; a man who made no profession of democracy; who would have weighed votes rather than have counted them; who preferred the judgments of experts to the unformed opinions of the crowd; who sought the society of gentlemen rather than that of 'longshoremen. Nevertheless, where he was called, there he was to be found!

Though not a believer in the democracy of party, it is by no means certain that he would have approved of recent legislative acts which seem to regard the Great and General Court, rather than the people, as the true fountain of municipal government under the constitution. I doubt if he ever contemplated, as a practical relief from bad government, any departure from that faith on which our political system rests — faith in the ability and the desire of the people to govern themselves wisely, honestly, efficiently.

I think Mr. Quincy saw, what all of us must see, that the people, acting without some unifying principle and purpose, are as the sand clouds of the desert, driven blindly and blinding; but

when, as in the late civil war, they are animated and guided by beneficent purpose, though like the sea sometimes turbulent, they are wiser even in their anger than any man however wise, or any number of men less than the whole.

Nothing concerns the people so much as government. It is the test of public morals, as the regulation of life is the test of private morals. Deprecate it as we may, quarrel with it if we will, nevertheless the world's judgment of us as a people by the practical results of our government, whether national, state, or municipal, is fair, and from that judgment there is no appeal. Mr. Quincy, therefore, made it a constant purpose of his life to present good government to the people as the highest end of civil society; to endue them with a unifying sense of its value, and to inspire them with the desire and determination of making themselves fit to take it up, carry it forward, and transmit it to their successors. He would spare no expense to educate them; would withhold no warning voice calling them to duty or impressing them with the conviction that expedients must be temporary and in the long run unsuccessful, and that, after all makeshifts have failed, none but the people will, or can, correct what is wrong or secure what is desirable in their government.

Josiah Quincy was not of the people, but with the people and for the people — always! If he never indulged in the illusions of hope respecting the perfectibility of popular government, he never indulged in the illusions of despair. His participation in government, as a private citizen or as a public officer, was part of his religion; not a new religion, but older than Sinai, and finding one sanction, at least, in the necessities of civilization. It needs disciples and, it may be, its martyrs.

Thus lived and died and was buried the first citizen of no mean city. Some of his fellow-citizens equaled him in genius, some in learning, and some in fidelity to duty; but in the combination of these qualities he had no superior and few equals. Mr. Quincy's death, though on account of his great age not unexpected, produced deep feeling among all classes of his fellow-citizens, and was followed by expressions of grief from every part of the country, and even from foreign lands. When he died a conspicuous per-

sonality was withdrawn from human view ; but his life and character and influence remain. They have passed into the life of the city for which he did so much ; a character which, as it becomes better known, may we not hope, will be accepted as the type for those who owe it to their ancestry to be great in affairs, capable of self-government, free, patriotic, and beneficent in all public relations. In honorable place among those who have founded cities, reformed institutions, and served God by unselfishly serving their fellow-men, is the name of Josiah Quincy, " the Great Mayor."













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